

Commas

1. Use commas to separate parts of an address.

Ex: Margaret lives at 423 Long View, Jordan, Minnesota, and needs to be added to the database.

2. Use commas to separate numbers in a date.

Ex: Jamie's birthday is December 20, 1970.

***Do not use commas if the day precedes the month:**

Jamie's birthday is 20 December 1970.

3. Use commas to set off the name of the person spoken to:

Ex: "Julie, have you finished?" he asked.

4. Use commas to set off positive and negative replies:

Ex: "Yes, he did finish."

5. Use commas to separate questions from statements.

Ex: It is tedious, isn't it?

6. Use commas after long introductory phrases.

Ex: In the back of the little shed on my grandfather's farm, I found a valuable antique.

7. Use commas before coordinating conjunctions

(For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, and So = FANBOYS) joining independent clauses:

Ex: He saw the accident, but she did not.

8. Use commas to set off parenthetical expressions, particularly transitional expressions such as however, on the other hand, first, in fact, and for example:

Ex: It is, I believe, the right thing to do.

9. Use commas to set off contrasting expressions.

Ex: The dancers, not the instructors, let us down.

10. Use commas to set off modifiers that are not needed to identify the meaning of the term.

Ex: Jan Reagan, my niece, is fifteen years old. (The fact that she is my niece is not necessary to identify Jessica.)

Her only brother, Jack, lives in town. (Since she only has one brother, it is not necessary to name him.)

11. Use commas to separate coordinate adjectives (two or more adjectives modifying the same noun).

Ex: The quiet, reluctant crowd of students waited for their professor's entrance.

Do Not Use Commas To:

1. Do not set off modifiers that are essential because they identify the meaning of the term.

Ex: My son Jonathan is ten. (I have two sons; therefore, I have to name the one I mean.)

2. Do not separate compound (1) subjects, (2) verbs, (3) complements, (4) direct objects, or (5) objects of the preposition.

Ex: (1) **Wrong:** Bob, and Jack (2) **Wrong:** Lupe took the candy, and ate it. (3) **Wrong:** The apples were firm, and ripe. (4) **Wrong:** James saw Carla, and Tom. (5) **Wrong:** Give it to Juan, and me.

3. Do not separate (1) Subjects from verbs, (2) complements from verbs, or (3) objects from verbs.

Ex: (1) **Wrong:** I, want you to go. (2) **Wrong:** I am, sick. He is, my brother. (3) **Wrong:** I want, a cake for my birthday.